

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 3834

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PEPR, US, ET  
SUBJ: ETHIOPIAN HERALD TREATMENT OF NAMRU

REFS: A) ADDIS ABABA 3617; B) ADDIS ABABA 3660; C) STATE 216861

1. APPRECIATE PROMPT REPLY TO OUR REQUEST FOR INFORMATION  
PERTAINING TO NAMRU-3 RESEARCH ACTIVITIES IN ETHIOPIA,  
1965-1977 (REFTEL C).

2. POLCOUNS DISCUSSED AUG 17 AND 18 NAMRU ARTICLES IN ETHIO-  
PIAN HERALD ("NAMRU - RESEARCH CENTRE OF OFFENSIVE BIOLOGICAL  
WEAPONS", REFTELS A AND B,) WITH TASSEW MAKONNEN, DEPUTY  
CHIEF OF FOREIGN MINISTRY'S AMERICAS DIVISION AUG 29. RE-  
STATING OUR PRACTICE THAT WE NORMALLY ONLY COMMENTED ON  
INACCURATE STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS OF THE PROVISIONAL MILI-  
TARY ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL (PMAC OR DIRG) OR GOVERNMENT  
OFFICIALS AND THAT WE IGNORED "PRIVATE" COMMENTARY IN THE  
GOVERNMENT-OWNED MEDIA, HE NOTED THAT THE NAMRU ARITCLES  
IN THE ETHIOPIAN HERALD APPEARED TO BE YET A DIFFERENT CATE-  
GORY - A SPECIFIC ATTEMPT AT DISINFORMATION. POLCOUNS SAID  
THAT AS THE ALLEGATIONS WERE SO TOTALLY FALSE THEY APPEARED  
DISIGNED TO SOW FEAR OF US MEDICAL RESEARCH ACTIVITIES ON  
THE PART OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF EGYPT AND THE PEOPLES' RE-  
PUBLIC OF CHINA. HE QUESTIONED WHAT PURPOSE AN ETHIOPIAN,  
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REGARDLESS OF HIS POLITICAL OUTLOOK, WOULD HAVE FOR THIS  
MOTIVE AND FURTHER, WHAT PURPOSE OF THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION  
IS SERVED BY PUBLICIZING IT. POLCOUNS CONCLUDED ON A PERSONAL  
BASIS BY EXPRESSING CONCERN THAT SUCH ARTICLES MADE IT  
POSSIBLE TO QUESTION WHETHER THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT WAS  
FULLY IN CONTROL OF ITS MEDIA.

3. TASSEW SAID HE WAS FULLY AWARE OF WHAT NAMRU'S ACTIVITIES IN ETHIOPIA HAD ACTUALLY BEEN AND AGREED THAT THE ARTICLES WERE TOTALLY FALSE, CONTENTIOUS AND CLEARLY UNHELPFUL IN SERVING THE CAUSE OF BETTER US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS. HE SAID THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, THROUGH ITS PERMANENT SECRETARY, MAJOR DAWIT, WAS MAKING AN EFFORT WITH THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MEDIA TO LIMIT CRITICISM OF COUNTRIES WITH WHICH ETHIOPIA MAINTAINED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. HE SAID THAT HE FULLY UNDERSTOOD THE MEANING OF "DISINFORMATION" AND AGREED THAT NO ETHIOPIAN PURPOSE WAS SERVED BY ARTICLES SUCH AS THE TWO ON AMNRU. HE NOTED THAT, UNFORTUNATELY, SUCH ARTICLES COULD STILL SLIP INTO THE MEDIA GIVEN THE PRESENT SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA. HE ASKED FOR OUR PATIENCE AND EAGERLY WELCOMED AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON NAMRU WHICH WE OFFERED FOR HIS USE (SUBSEQUENTLY FURNISHED BY LETTER BASED ON REFTEL C).

4. IT WOULD TAKE MORE EMPLOYEES THAN WE HAVE AND THE RESOURCES OF A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF THE USG TO CORRECT EVERY MALICIOUS, INACCURATE STATEMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED MEDIA HERE. IT WOULD ALSO BE FRUITLESS. WHEN AND IF OUR RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA EVOLVE TO A BETTER BASIS, WE BELIEVE THAT MUCH OF THE CRITICISM WILL EITHER DISAPPEAR OR BE MODERATED IN TONE. AS THE OCCASION PRESENTS ITSELF, AS IT DID IN THE CASE OF THE NAMRU ARTICLES, WE WILL QUESTION ETHIOPIAN OFFICIALS ON WHETHER THEY ARE FULLY IN CONTROL OF THEIR OWN MEDIA, SHOWING DOUBT WHEN DOUBT EXISTS, HOPING

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THAT ETHIOPIAN NATIONALISM AND PRIDE WILL LEAD EVENTUALLY TO THE PROPER CONCLUSIONS AND CORRECTIVE ACTION.

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## Message Attributes

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